

Restoring professionalism: What can Public Administration learn from Social Psychology?

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Abstract

Administrative reform is about changing structures, institutions and about changing the attitudes, motives and work conduct of the people working within those structures. Our previous research (Sobis & De Vries, 2008) into the process of technical assistance to governments in CEE-countries in transition during the period 1990-2004, found that the ineffectiveness thereof was due to a combination of problems. We pointed to a combination of contrary objectives among the organizations involved and awkward resource dependencies within the aid-chain, and also to the emergence of a specific kind of attitudes among professionals. In public administration, one often thinks that performance measurement, monitoring and evaluations could solve that problem. This approach, however, has proven to have serious negative side effects. The main objective of this paper is to search for alternatives to this approach.

In this paper, we seek these alternatives within the discipline of social psychology. This discipline sees human behavior as the result of the interaction of mental states and immediate social situations. We will argue that public administration can learn from theories in social psychology and the application thereof to organizational behavior in the public sector. An application on the technical assistance by western advisors to the governments in CEE-countries in transition illustrates the findings.

1. Introduction

This paper is about one of the major problems in public administration reform, namely ways to create or restore professionalism and what the discipline of Public Administration can learn in this regard from theories and experiments as developed and conducted in the academic discipline of social psychology.

From our previous research into the technical assistance provided to CEE-countries during their transition process, we concluded that the disappearance of the classic values of professionalism caused part of the flaws. These classic values of professionalism include commitment and empathy, non-misrepresentation, having the clients' interests in mind, building expertise, aiming at interventions that best suit the situation at hand, and that are based on sound problem diagnosis. They are opposite to modern values in professionalism in which advice is preferably emotion-free, aimed at keeping up appearances and financial gains for the advisor, whose advice is founded on his formal education, and whose interventions are based on standard setting and prefixed goals.

This problem is likely to be more general than just applicable to the advisory world. Regardless of the issue at stake – public integrity, management and organizational, service delivery or politico-administrative relations - one of the main questions always crucial is how to restore professionalism. The emerging dominance of these novel values goes hand in hand with steering based on principles derived from the market and neo-institutional theory. Central concepts are competition, value for money, reducing information-asymmetry by using performance measurement, monitoring, evaluations and benchmarking (cf. Kubr, 2002). The downsides thereof have been discussed many times (see a/o Halachmi & Bouckaert, 1996, Hood, 1991, Lonti & Gregory, 2007).

The reduction of information asymmetry using performance measurement might well result in an artificial picture of reality. Furthermore, it is time and energy consuming (Easterly, 2006), often not used in the way it is intended, and it seems to increase the kind of professionalism one wants to avoid, that is, the one keeping up appearances (Sobis & De Vries, 2008). Many scholars have also pointed to the perverse implications of incentives and continuous reorganizations that often do not meet the intended goals. Many question the underlying assumption that attempts to adjust input, process, and output on the basis of such neo-institutional instruments would almost automatically result also in improved outcomes, i.e. professionalism (Behn, 2003, Bovaird & Loeffler, 2003). However, an adequate alternative has not yet emerged. Therefore, it might be useful to search for alternative ways to restore and improve professionalism. That is exactly what this paper intends to do.

The basic question underlying this paper is; *whether scientific disciplines related to public administration – in this paper social psychology - offer an alternative to the neo-institutional approach of reducing information asymmetry, using incentives and reorganizations in order to improve professionalism in complex organizations.*

We search for the answer to this question in scientific disciplines that are related, but nonetheless separate from Public Administration. In this paper, we concentrate on the body of knowledge as produced in Social Psychology. This seems to be a promising discipline, because as will be argued below, attitude change, which is a crucial dimension for restoring professionalism, is exactly the topic social psychology addresses. Furthermore, this discipline has an interesting theoretical tradition that can be useful to target this problem. On the one hand, social psychology focuses on *cognitive balance* – the necessary condition for people's thinking, for their capacity to act. On the other hand, social psychologists have developed theories departing in the theory of cognitive balance, but developed beyond the basic concepts. They explain how people reconstruct their cognitive balance in case they experienced cognitive imbalance, cognitive incongruity, and cognitive dissonance; and how they use self-persuasion and perceive themselves. These theories provide us with tools to analyze people's uncomfortable feelings disturbing them to act e.g. continue function in a professional way. This discipline proposes an interesting solution, namely socialization resulting in a psychological contract. This paper discusses those theories and is structured by the following sub-questions:

1. What are the central concepts in social psychology?
2. How is the problem of restoring and creating professionalism defined and approached in social psychology?
3. Which practical lessons on restoring and creating professionalism in public sector organizations emerge from that research and those theories?
4. Does this approach offer an adequate solution for our problem and is it applicable to the area of international technical assistance?

2. The social psychological approach to the resort of professionalism in general

At the heart of social psychology is the phenomenon of social influence on individuals. It is widely known that other people influence us all during our life (Kaplan, 2001: 2772). It is not so surprising that one of the major tasks of social psychology is to explain how people are influenced by their social world.

Below, we present some social psychological theories that in our opinion have relevance and explanatory power to our research. We believe that social psychology with its understanding for values, norms, attitudes, change of attitudes or even change of professional identities can explain how to restore and improve professionalism when transferring knowledge from the Western countries to the countries in the need of know-how when aid providing.

In social psychology, the definition of our problem i.e., restoring of professionalism (especially in the process of technical assistance) can be interpreted in several ways. It involves concepts such as beliefs, values, norms, preferences, attitudes, motives, needs, expectation, customs, and goals. All these concepts seem to be promising factors, to explain to some degree how the involved in the aid-chain could change from idealist and committed professionals into cynical, detached professionals, keeping up appearances, making careers and money, and perhaps provide an answer to the questions, *how to restore the values, and how to change attitudes for the better.*

Margaret Mooney Marini (2001) has presented a consistent theory distinguishing all these concepts that can be useful to explain organizational behavior. In fact, she is writing about social values and norms in general, but her approach seems to be also relevant to organizations and their influence on individual behaviors, in our opinion. According to her:

Values and norms are evaluative beliefs that synthesize affective and cognitive elements to orient people to the world in which they live. Their evaluative element makes them unlike existential beliefs, which focus primarily on matters of truth or falsehood, correctness or incorrectness. Their cognitive element makes them unlike motives that can derive from emotions or psychological drives. Values and norms involve cognitive beliefs of approval or disapproval. Although they tend to persist through time

and therefore faster continuity in society and human personality, they also are susceptible to change (Marini, 2001: 2828).

Marini argues that “values and norms involve cognitive beliefs of approval and disapproval”. They essentially contribute to faster continuity by development of human personality in a society. Moreover, values and norms can also be changed by time. She emphasizes that:

The evaluative criteria represented in values and norms influence the behavior of subject units at multiple levels (e.g., individuals, organizations, and societies) as well as judgments about the behaviors of others, which also can influence behavior. (...) Values and norms also affect evaluation of the governing policies and practices of societies and thus have an impact on diplomatic relations and the policies of one society's government toward other societies (2001: 2828).

A value is seen as “a belief about the desirability of a mode, means, or end of action” (Marini, 2001: 2828). Value informs us what is perceived as a good respective a bad behavior in a specific situation. The evaluative criteria of value are based on morality, aesthetics and achievement not on “scientific or utilitarian grounds”. She stresses that a value cannot be mixed with a *preference*; a value can be seen as a specific type of preference, but “not all preferences are values”. A similar remark concerns the concept of *an attitude*. Marini explains:

An attitude refers to an organization of several beliefs around a specific object or situation, whereas a value refers to a single belief of a specific kind: a belief about desirability that is based in conceptions of morality, aesthetics and achievement and transcends specific behaviors and situation (Marini, 2001: 2828).

Marini argues that a value should not be confused with the concept of a *motive* because the last one is based on:

(...) the ability to induce valences (incentives) that may be positive or negative. A value has a motive property, involving a predisposition to act in a certain way, because it affects the evaluation of the expected consequences of an action and therefore the choice among possible alternatives; however, it is a less person-centered concept than a motive, which also encompasses emotions and drives. A value is a particular type of motive involving a belief about desirability of an action that derives from evaluation of that action's expected consequences in a situation (Marini, 2001: 2829).

According to Marini (2001), a value differs also from a *need* that is rather perceived as “a requirement for the continued performance of an activity and the attainment of other valued outcomes” (p. 2829). A need has usually biological or psychological basis. In many cases, human needs create the structure of economic situation e.g., people need income that can influence an actor to act against this person's desire or values. Finally, even a *goal* seems to be something different then a value even if a value can be thought as a value just because goals are quite often selected based on values. “Values are not goals of behavior. They are evaluative criteria that are used to select goals and appraise the implication of action” (Marini, 2001: 2829)

A *norm*, according to Marini (2001) in many respects plays a similar role for individuals' behavior as a value. It is also an evaluative belief based on morality, aesthetics, and achievements. However, the distinction between these two concepts is following: a value puts stress on the desirability of behavior, while “a norm is a belief about the acceptability of behavior” (p. 2829). A norm point out rather which a behavior is right respective wrong, “allowable versus unallowable or it indicates what a behavior ought to be or ought not to be” (p. 2829). Thus, norms have also a prescriptive character about what should be done, while values represent a feeling of desirability, of attraction or repulsion. Moreover, a norm are much more concrete since it refers to a very concrete behavior i.e., what should be done. However, a norm is different then a *custom* because “a custom involves an expectation of what an actor will do” (p. 2830) e.g., drinking tee in England 5 o'clock is a custom, not a norm what the Englishmen ought to do.

The distinctions between the concepts of value, preference, attitude, motive, need and goal and the concept of norm and a custom are promising factors to explain to some degree how the involved in the

aid-chain could change from idealist and committed professionals into cynical, detached professionals, keeping up appearances, making careers and money.

3. The explanation of disturbed professionalism in Social Psychology

One of the major findings in Social Psychology is that values and attitudes are rather stable. One can change a political regime from a communist to a capitalist system, but this does not automatically imply that the values of the individuals in the changed regime also alter (cf. Rokeach, 1973). This is also true in the world of public administration according to Szucz and Stromberg (2006), who found little value change among local elites in the 15 years following the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. This general finding implies two things: firstly, it is difficult to change value systems and secondly, if such value change is nonetheless accomplished, it will be probably lasting for people's thinking and acting.

3.1. *The problem as a consequence of flawed socialization*

The creation of values, attitudes, and norms for behavior occurs in what social psychologists call a process of socialization i.e., the process through which people are integrated in society or an organization through exposure to the opinions and actions of other members of society or the organization. First of all, parents pass on values and norms to their children in a culture that creates order, prediction and meaning. Thanks to culture, an individual constructs intellectual pictures and understanding of reality that provide him/her with the insight how to act.

Various scientific disciplines focused attention on socialization. However, each discipline did it in its own way. Anthropologists perceive socialization almost as cultural transmission from one generation to the next and focus their studies quite often on the relation between "culture and personality" (Malinowski, 1927; Mead, 1928). Psychologists or social psychologists (Piaget, 1926; Goslin, 1999) have interest in socialization as the social process that influences an individuals' cognitive development until maturation. There are two approaches to the concept. Firstly, socialization can be seen as the learning and internalizing of the social roles and statuses of the groups to which individuals belong. These new roles we learn first within the family and in this case, we are talking about primary socialization. Successively we observe secondary socializing agents appearing like play groups and work groups who continue the process through the experience of rewards or punishment to induce proper behavior.

Socialization can also be seen as self-concept formation e.g., George Herbert Mead (1934) perceived the self as a reflexive phenomenon that develops through symbolic interaction, by language.

In its most common and general usage, the term "socialization" refers to the process of interaction through which an individual (a novice) acquires the norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, and language characteristic of his or her group. In the course of acquiring these cultural elements, the individual self and personality are created and shaped. Socialization therefore addresses two important problems in social life: societal continuity from one generation to the next and human development (Gecas, 2001: 2855).

According to social psychological theories dealing with various approach to cognitive balance, when socialization is lacking this can result in disturbed self-persuasion or a self-perception that focuses on the wrong criteria.

3.2. *Consistency theories*

Is it possible for values and attitudes to change? A classic approach to explain attitude change in social psychology departs from so-called *consistency theories*. It is assumed that attitudes provide cognitive structure thus facilitating the ease with which information can be processed, the ease to work and the ease to gain self-esteem. Individuals are assumed to strive for balance and coherence in their attitudes. Theories that focus on these phenomena do exist. However, these suggest rather different approaches in explaining how people create balance in various situations they experience.

A classic theory departing from consistency theory is the theory created by Heider (1946, 1958) on *cognitive balance* in which it is assumed that individuals strive to belong to stable systems. Personal

stability is achieved if persons I like do like the same others or other things as I do. It emphasizes belongingness to a group. It is seen in such proverbs like “the enemies of my enemies are my friends”, and it is relevant to explain friendship development, conformity and reactions to criticism.

Heider predicted that actors try to alter the situation in order to have it become balanced and the theory predicts that one’s strive for balance is more important than content. As Rosenberg (1960) noted, the resolution of inconsistency follows the path of least resistance. Hence, the effort to attain a balance might well go at the expense of content, which is what is actually seen in the area of international technical assistance.

Osgood and Tannenbaum (1957) argue something similar in their incongruity theory. People tend to decrease a cognitive imbalance by decreasing the importance of their original values. If a positively and negatively object are linked, the tendency is toward neutrality i.e., indifference. As Abelson (1959) already noted, there are several ways to achieve balance in an imbalanced situation. One can add complexity to the situation, or reduce precision (in which the imbalance gets blurred).

Looking upon it from a public administrative perspective imbalanced situations are explanatory for increasing bureaucratization, emphasizing procedures, indifference and detachment, e.g. pathways to our ideal type of modern professionalism.

A related theory is the one by Festinger on *cognitive dissonance*. Dissonance occurs according to Festinger if two elements of knowledge are in such a relation that when only considering these elements the obverse of one element would follow from the other. Every person will try to reduce dissonance and to achieve consonance. It implies that people try to seek evidence to confirm their actions that they try to make their actions conform to their attitudes and even that people change preferences under the strain of dissonance.

This theory poses a quite different light on incentives, the role of utility and its influence on behavior. According to this theory reducing cognitive dissonance is much more important in explaining choices than maximizing utility. In the famous Festinger-Carlsberg experiment, which was repeated and adapted many times, people disliking a task (e.g. making a false testimony) were offered an incentive to do so nevertheless. The experiments showed that the higher the incentive the less enjoyable the task was perceived. Normally, or theorizing from the assumption that everybody maximizes economic utility, one would not expect this. The reward for doing something one does not like to do could compensate for the behavior. However, in Festinger’s theory such outcomes can be explained because the dissonance between the positively perceived reward and the negatively perceived task makes people feel uncomfortable. Hence, one would expect those people that are most outspoken of the negative aspects of a task to be most uncomfortable, whereas for those people that do not care that much, the dissonance is smaller and they even might change their attitudes towards being positive about the task.

The experiment was repeated many times by different scholars in Social psychology and is known as the *reverse incentive experiment*. It is comparable to our findings in the technical assistance provided to CEE-countries, where we observed advisors going to CEE-countries in transition without any preparation, doing hardly anything else than standard setting and providing advice which fell flat, but nevertheless writing self-evaluations making claims about excellent work, impressive progress and huge effectiveness. It can be similarly applied to the donor-organizations reporting to their financiers.

According to social psychological theorizing by Festinger and Carlsmith the outcomes of the 1959 experiment were conform the expectations of the theory on cognitive dissonance. People who received more money were less enjoying their task because the cognitive dissonance between their attitudes towards the task (negative) and the reward (positive) is larger.

The theory on self-persuasion (Mead, 1934) states that to respond to one’s own behavior is a product of social interaction. Every organization faces the problem to train its employees to respond to external and internal stimuli, how to evaluate themselves and the way they are expected to handle the tasks to be performed. The questions are; what or to whom the employees refer their own actions when judging and how to induce them to use a proper reference-frame. A classic example may illustrate this. When do you say you are hungry? Is it a consequence of a physiological event that your body needs input in order to keep functioning or are you looking at your wrist-watch as many in the modern day society do to see if it is already lunch time? The same question arises when evaluating one’s work. What is the frame of reference? Does it accord to the plan? Does one follow procedures? Does one feel in all the questions in the evaluation report? Does one accomplish the prefixed goals?

This is similar to the findings coming from an alternative theory in social psychology, namely the *self-perception theory* (Bem, 1972). In this theory, it is supposed that people infer their attitudes from their behavior in the same way outsiders do. It asserts that we only have that knowledge of our own behavior and its causation that another person can have, and that we therefore develop our attitudes by observing our own behavior and concluding what attitudes must have caused them. Hence, if we are forced to act in a particular way, our attitudes towards the work will change accordingly. Central is the question 'what must my – this man's -attitudes be if I am – he is- willing to behave in this fashion in this situation' (Bem, 1972: 28). If I am behaving this way, my attitudes must be like this and hence, these are thus, my attitudes.

This theoretical approach is somewhat in line with the previous presented examples of cognitive imbalance experienced by the respondents from various organizations.

Summarizing

This section used social psychology theories to explain why organizational behavior can become disturbed, how values can be changed. The theories point to flawed socialization, disturbed self-persuasion, cognitive imbalance, incongruity, dissonance and self-perception, which prove to be a mixture of various feelings. This being the case what does such analysis offer as solutions. The next section will address that question.

4. Solutions offered by social psychology

In public administration, the dominant approach to problems in organizational behavior is to control, monitor, use performance measurement and (self-)evaluations. Given the theories presented above, the solutions derived from theories in social psychology are quite different. First, we pointed to socialization theories. Following this line of thinking, one can point to the possibility to create professionalism by organizational socialization. More specifically such socialization provides an answer to the question when professionalism can be created. The consistency theories with their more specific focus on how people lose balance and can re-create balance in various situations they experience might provide a solution for restoring professionalism. Combining both might result in what is known in social psychology as a so-called *psychological contract* in which properly socialized professionals can work without oversight, monitoring and performance measurement. This issue will be explained below.

4.1. Socialization

Attitudes are passed on from parents to children and many of these acquired values are quite stable though the remainder of one's life (Rokeach, 1973). However, experiments in social psychology show that this influence and stability decreases at certain points in the life cycle. There are certain points in a person's life, in which he or she is more open to new influences and is able and willing to change attitudes. The first point is when children enter high school (Jennings, 1968). The second point is the freshman's year in university (Goldsen, 1960) and the third point is when people acquire a job, in which case they are open to organizational socialization. In principle, each time people come under new influences, their world changes and so might their attitudes. Our life is like wandering through plenty of organizations like family, school, sport-club, recreational settings, political party, religious organizations, voluntary associations, workplace, trade union, professional organizations, state etc. All these organizations or rather their staffs are for us socialization-agents, who influence our values, norms, attitudes, and behavior.

The susceptibility to value-change during the first period after which people have acquired a job suggests when socialization is likely to accomplish the internalization of specific values. It points to the effectiveness of addressing these values and to show especially during the first period a new employee enters the organization coherent and exemplary behavior. With regard to our basic problem, the restoration and creation of the values of professional attitudes, this implies that the experiences employees internalize during the first period (some see the first months, for others the first year is crucial) in which they enter the new situation determine for a large part the direction their attitudes are moving. Employees can be socialized in a "right culture". It is the latent steering of employees' behaviors.

Such socialization is almost entirely brought about by middle management. Social psychologists usually name them “experienced organizational members”. Sustaining values, attitudes and norms are internalized by the examples to follow and by the training that the mid-level managers provide. The idea of socialization implies that since values and norms are rather stable, transmitting the necessary values and norms in this period, affects the attitudes of the employees for a long time i.e., irrespective of monitoring and measuring. Thus, early socialization can save a lot of monitoring costs later on.

As to *the format* of such socialization, findings from the literature suggest that the sustainability of the acquired knowledge, skills and incorporated values, attitudes and norms vary with the socialization tactics used. Some have distinguished between collective versus individual socialization, formal versus informal socialization, sequential versus random socialization, fixed versus variable socialization, serial versus disjunctive socialization, and investiture versus divestiture (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Recent research pointed to the importance of especially the sequential, formal, serial, and investiture nature of socialization i.e., socialization through structured career progression and institutionalized training programs, as well as the provision of role models and support from experienced organizational members (Cable, 1994).

As to *the contents* of such socialization understood in terms of ‘mental programming’, the number of topics to be included, and the relative importance of each of them varies. Most scholars agree that it should at least involve the following four topics: (1) acquiring knowledge about the formal features of organization (i.e., goals, strategy and organizational structure) and its informal features (i.e., organizational culture and power relations). (2) This results in acceptance; learning to function within groups, how to do the job and the acknowledgement of the needed skills and knowledge. (3) It also results in the incorporation of work group values, attitudes, norms and understanding for good friendships; that leads to (4) establishing personal change and learning with regard to identity, self-image, and motives behind doing a job (Schein, 1978, 1980; Fisher, 1986; Louis, 1980; Morrison, 1994; Greenhouse, 1999). According to them socialization involves multiple stages from anticipatory, through accommodation to role management (Feldman, 1976) or from confronting and accepting organizational reality through achieving job clarity and locating oneself inside the organization to mutual acceptance, satisfaction, motivation and commitment (Wanous, 1992).

The contents can also be focused on cognitive imbalance and cognitive dissonance. Such feelings can arise also because of the discrepancy between organizational expectations and pragmatic feasibility, the discrepancy between the presumed superiority of knowledge of the newcomer and the experience within the organization to deal with such novel ideas. Thus, the cognitive imbalance, and dissonance that arise might well be more consequential than the cognitive imbalance occurring between two friends who feel differently about something, or between two enemies who share similar preferences as social psychologists or psychologists argue.

If one would anticipate on such cognitive dissonance, the mentioned theories offer the tools to change the values of employees in the opposite direction. If such dissonance is experienced and the assumption is true that it is experienced as an unpleasant drive state, the individual is motivated to reduce it. This can be done by *changing cognitions*. If two cognitions are discrepant, the actor can simply change one to make it consistent with the other. The actor can change cognitions in the direction of other cognitions. A second possibility is *adding cognitions*, if two cognitions cause a certain magnitude of dissonance, that magnitude can be reduced by adding one or more consonant cognitions. Thirdly, the actor can *alter his weighing of cognitions*. Since the discrepant and consonant cognitions are weighed by importance, it may be advantageous to alter the importance of the various cognitions.

A good preparation or socialization in this regard is feasible, because of the extensive experience in the field. Such socialization could prepare employees for the inevitable occurrence of cognitive dissonance and provide criteria, even try to internalize such criteria to assure that employees when arriving in a situation that requires changing, adding or reweighing cognitions do so in the direction the mission of the task requires.

In order to accomplish this, it has been argued to have newcomers especially during the first year of their arrival work in teams with tenured and experience employees, because in Social psychology the expected results come about especially through interaction (Tannenbaum et al, 1992). In all our research, we only found one example of such an intensive socialization process.

The literature addressing the variance in effectiveness of such teams argues that this depends on contextual characteristics, such as the reward system and the organizational culture (Ashfort, 1996), on team characteristics such as the manner of coordination, communication, and conflict resolution, on individual characteristics and team diversity and on the interaction between these characteristics (Tannenbaum et al, 1992). Others pointed to the impact of team motivational processes, such as group cohesion, collective efficacy, and performance norms, leadership motivation, team effective process, leadership and team affect, and coordination processes. Jeongkoo Yoon (2006) pointed to the role of the presence of a leader's salient vision and inclination to self-sacrifice to enhance team effectiveness.

4.2. *Resulting in a psychological contract*

Such socialization results in clarity and congruence about what the new employee and the organization he or she is working for can reasonably expect from one another. In social psychology, this is called *a psychological contract*. It is unlike the normal contract in which the duties, the pay and all kind of legal arrangements are laid down. It "relates to our mind and therefore is intangible (Wellin, 2007: 17). Argyris (1960) first has used this term and defined it as the implicit understanding between a group of employees and their supervisor. He sketched the psychological contract in exactly the way we search for, namely as a means to reduce oversight and control. He described it as:

A relationship may be hypothesized to evolve between the employees and the foremen, which might be called the 'psychological work contract'. The employee will maintain high production, low grievances etc. if the foreman guarantees and respects the norms of the employee informal culture (i.e. let the employees alone, make certain they make adequate wages and have secure jobs) (Argyris, 1960).

Later on Schein defined the psychological contract as the unwritten expectations operating at all times between every member of an organization and the various managers and others in that organization... Each employee has expectations about such things as salary or pay rate, working hours, benefits and privileges that go with a job... the organization also has more implicit, subtle expectations that the employee will enhance the image of the organization, will be loyal, will keep organizational secrets and will do his or her best (Schein, 1965).

More recently, Denise Rousseau (1994, 1995), redefined the psychological contract as something that essentially exists in each individual's head, as the "individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization" (Rousseau, 1995, p. 9). Wellin perceives the psychological contract as "the actions employees believe are expected of them and what response they expect in return from the employer" (2007: 27). As such, the psychological contract cannot be laid down on paper as some companies think or something to be agreed upon during the last phases of recruitment. In its original meaning it is something that emerges from a socialization period.

Summarizing

This section addressed the question in which way our problem regarding professionalism can be solved using social psychology theorizing. First, we discussed the "when" of attitude change. It was argued that in social psychology people's values and attitudes are rather stable. However, social psychology provides us also with some evidence that people are open for new ideas, able, and willing to change their values whenever they enter in a new situation. This implies that they will be open for change especially during the first period they enter an organization. Socialization during that period seems therefore sensible. It was argued further using consistency theories that value change becomes more probable when people experience cognitive imbalance, incongruity and dissonance. In such circumstances, they are likely to change, add or reweigh their cognitions. It could thus be recommended to create (artificial) situations of cognitive dissonance during this period of socialization in order to see how and in which way newcomers change, add or reweigh cognitions and to adjust this process in order to make this congruent with company objectives. In this way a psychological contract can emerge, as an implicit understanding of mutual expectations, in which the basic values and

company procedures, and the criteria to be used in making difficult choices in adverse situation as well as the relative weights thereof are incorporated.

5. An illustration of the theories

We started this paper with the question social psychology asks, namely how people are influenced by their social world. In the previous section, the answers provided by social psychology were presented. This seems to be a relevant idea, because it happens to too many young employees that they are hardly socialized during the first year in their work. Employers do not take the necessary time to invest in these newcomers. Sometimes they are even completely ignored and left alone. Sometimes, in large organizations, their employers do not even know that they are there or why they were hired in the first place.

Given our previous research into the practice of international technical assistance we wonder whether the answer social psychology provides is applicable to this area. It is of course a special area in which consultants are employed by donor organizations in order to advise public institutions. Comparable to interim managers it cannot be expected that such advisors are socialized within the context of their clients before they start advising. This is unrealistic and there is a strong argument that this would run counter to their independence. However, one might expect of them that they were socialized within the organization they are paid by. It might even be of extreme importance that this becomes reality, because people working in the world of international technical assistance are especially susceptible to situations inducing cognitive imbalance. Applying the theory on cognitive dissonance to our field of international technical assistance, the recipients who receive grants from a donor-organization or government to hire foreign advisors will develop a favorable attitude towards this donor-organization. However, they also see the advisors who hardly give useful advice, to whom they develop a negative attitude, and simultaneously see those advisors well rewarded by the donor-organizations. This could result in a cognitive imbalance from the perspective of the recipients. The same goes for the advisors who might have a positive inclination to being effective and like the donor-organization for paying them for the job, but who dislike the donor-organization for their desired contents of the work to be done. Moreover, it is applicable to donor-organizations in relation to their government. On the one hand, they are on the same side because of the financial relation, but regarding major objectives in relation to what is necessary and possible to do, the views often differ considerably (Sobis & De Vries, 2009). This also results in an imbalanced situation. This can be illustrated by what we heard from one of our respondents in the area of technical assistance:

You feel quite often that you get jammed; on the one hand, you have some demands from aid-recipient and you are within the real project-work. To be paid for your work, you have to do that what is in a contract, defined by those who pay for your work. On the other hand, you have to show flexibility towards aid-recipients. There is a big difference between the situation of being aid-recipient and of being aid-provider. You do not talk about the same things. I was the leader of a project to Russia. It was a tough job. You have bureaucrats on the one side and you have to keep all the deadlines. On the other hand, you have the representative of various governmental departments who want something more that was specified within the contract (...). Now, I recommend only the methods I know that would be promising in practice. It has to do with my earlier experiences.

Below we will analyze the social psychology theories in this light and illustrate the analysis with some quotes from people in that field who were interviewed. Of course, such analysis combined with some quotes does not present evidence or prove. It just illustrates in which way the social psychology theories can be applied in the reality of organizational behavior especially in an international setting. It is illustrative for the social psychological answer to the question how the involved actors in the Western aid-chain to the CEE- countries were influenced by the organizations to which they belonged when providing aid and how the answer to this question can help to change this influence for the better. In international advisory work and technical assistance, foreign advisors are bound to encounter situations in which cognitive imbalance, incongruity or dissonance arises. Be it because of cultural variety and even culture shock or because of the discrepancy between beliefs one does not share but has to respect. One can refer to the cultural distinctions made by Hofstede (1980), who distinguished among others high-power cultures in which high value on conformity, hierarchy, supervision, weak

work ethic, absence of trust, paternalism and autocracy dominate, and low-power distance cultures in which the opposite values dominate. He furthermore distinguished between three other dimensions of cultural difference, in terms of individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity and high and low degrees of uncertainty avoidance.

To make it clear from the start, many of the people we interviewed shared the opinion that any form of socialization was lacking when they entered the business. To give some quotes:

I was not prepared nor did anything to prepare myself, not at all. I was sent abroad in this way twice. First, I was sent by the Department of Finance to Moscow in 1992. Later in 2001-2002, I went there again with the TACIT project. Two times, I did not have time to any preparation. I went only to see what could be done (...) certainly; I was more prepared when I went there the second time. The year of 2001, they had at least an office in Moscow to such the cooperation. They had the bas and resources but it was not at all preparation. It was a very limited understanding how to provide this aid. It was nothing to start this work.

Moreover:

The problem is when a person who describes a commission for an aid-recipient country does not know anything about the country to which the aid-project is addressed. I have seen students who did it like this. How can they propose recommendations and describe the transfer of knowledge to the country about which they know nothing? It demands some specialization in an area. It is not enough to an aid-project. It concerns the aid-projects that are expected to give some impact on the economic development. TACIT have gotten awfully reviews in this regard. It sheered stupidity.

We differed not much from the EU standard-setters. We had no co-operation with other aid-providers. However, we ought to work towards the same direction. Sometimes, when we (consultants/experts) met on various conferences, we experienced a very good feeling when exchanging thoughts and experiences from aid providing. We repeatedly told one another; let us meet once a month. There were many people but no one had such activities in their commission. Time and money for the administrative work to invite others and to prepare an agenda for a meeting were lacking. We wanted to share experiences but we neither had time nor resources for that (...) I have not gone through any education program preparing me to this work. We were independent in our activities through thick and thin.

A representative of aid-organization explained:

Some aid-projects demand pilot studies to identify the social or environment problems. For those things, we are hiring private consultants and experts. They make expertise. We agree about their work-duties, financial contribution, earnings (...). It can be university teachers who have competence, or consultants that have a firm position on a market and have this competence. We are choosing people to work in different ways, due to a purpose with assistance and we can always be criticized for that (...). We observe development in this regard. At the beginning, we had very limited knowledge about aid-recipient countries. The first consultants and experts never got any preparation from us (...), when our activities were more and more expanding, especially regarding the environment issues, it proved that we have had good consultants that had knowledge on this topic and about the local conditions of aid-recipients.

One can observe that some rudiments of socialization became visible through time. However, we still have the impression that the actors involved did not internalize the values, attitudes and norms for behaviors during a socialization process just because in general some mistakes still occurred. At the beginning of transition, any experiences how to provide aid to the post-socialist countries and the Western aid-organizations was lacking and project aimed just at showing that they care, that they are assisting, especially if it concerned the countries with which they had some historical relations. One of the respondents told us that: "An international specialized division of labor among aid-organizations arose. Sweden went into Central European countries with some specialized skills" (R5, 2005: 4). Not one aid-organization had provided aid to CEE before and therefore, they had to learn by doing and by drawing an analogy to the experiences of aid providing to the African or Latin American countries, which were rather different. At the end of 1990s, the aid-organization had some experiences and went

further with aid providing to the Balkans and Asia, but stories from these recipients are not optimistic on expected improvements.

This could be explained by the nature of what was socialized at work i.g., organizational steering based on procedures and biased performance measurement. This reminds us of disturbed self-persuasion, because if such organizational socialization does not include rewards for the substance of work, one cannot expect that the classic values of professionalism will be created, or will survive. In the same way as the well-fed individual says he is hungry, because it is nearly 6 pm, the employee will judge his work positive because he has filled in all the questions in the evaluation report. If newcomers learn that to care or to show empathy to listen, to adapt one's advice to the problems at hand, and to adapt one's advice to the specific circumstances does not pay off, and that the only thing that does pay off is a positive (self) evaluation report, even if this refers to an artificial world that in reality does not exist, it is probable that the classic values of professionalism disappear. As one of the advisors told us:

It is very difficult with aid. Many variants and measures are possible in the area. Transfer of knowledge... How to measure that? Do you count the number of papers that you distributed? Do you count the number of participants in training? I do not know how to do it. The most successful projects caused that everybody was pleased. When you find a co-operation method, not a training program then you see that, it works.

Concentrating on the field of foreign technical assistance, we have presented some statements of our respondents, who confirmed that young and inexperienced advisors did not get time to prepare their mission. The interviews conducted with the representative of aid-organizations and Governmental agencies showed that they were interested in the progress in the recipient countries as long these countries took their own responsibility for development. They assumed that the transfer of Western knowledge was enough assistance resulting in "win-win" solutions (Sobis & de Vries 2007, 2008). Aid-organizations were almost solely interested in positive evaluations about standards that the advisors were supposed to set. Therefore, what do they internalize as values? That it is not necessary to prepare decently, that it does not matter what kind of advice is given, and that it does not matter whether one leaves before the advice is implemented.

The young academics entered a field of foreign advisory work they hardly knew and they entered an organizational setting of which it was ambiguous what to expect. In addition, how were they socialized? Their commissioners told them something like; "Let's see and describe what they need"; "Just do something. Act as if you know what to do"; "Make up appearances and set your goals beforehand. Afterwards just write down that you did a wonderful job and that you were very effective, and we give you the next assignment. Subsequently, they were let loose in the jungle of international advice to CEE governments".

This practice was quite different from recommendations made in psychological literature about the importance of preparing personnel for overseas transfer (Lanier, 1979; Argyris, 1999), of orientation programs (Anchor & Marston, 1981; Grochowski & Ben-Gera, 2002), and the need to convince newcomers of the importance of contingencies (Tung, 1993). Such socialization would include pre-visits, early language training, intensive study on history, culture and etiquette, the provision of handbooks, counseling facilities, developing a congruence between the advisors and organization's expectations about the job, and developing belief in the mission, technical skills, political sensitivity and cultural empathy (Cleveland et al, 1960).

We are aware that a process of socialization is time consuming. Perhaps, it was even impossible to conform to such an ideal situation for newcomers at the beginning of aid-providing to the CEE countries. However, we believe that after two-three years it became possible, when the aid providers collected the first experiences in the question, when they knew what should be done and how in order to adapt much more aid-providing to the needs of aid-recipients without losing the win-win relations between aid-providers and aid-recipients. They knew what behavior was effective in practice within CEE-countries. Our empirical data tell us, however, that aid-providers did not change their aid-projects and programs in this regard. They just moved on with the same institutional and organizational standard further to the Balkans, and the post-socialist countries in Asia. This indicates that the professionalism thereof in its classic understanding can be still disputed (Sobis & de Vries, 2008).

As to *cognitive incongruity* which as we argued can be seen in denial, bolstering (finding an overarching value that overcomes the imbalance), differentiation (redefining the situation), transcendence (relating the imbalance to a more abstract level to subsume it) and cease thinking. The theory on cognitive dissonance provides an explanation for the flight away of the classic professionals, who do not enjoy the fashion, in which they are supposed to act and who become cynical and frustrated, because of this cognitive dissonance. It could explain why in foreign advisory work especially the real classic professionals tend to become cynical and angry and eventually so disappointed that they flee their organization, when their task is only judged and rewarded through monitoring, performance measurement and evaluations in which the relevant aspects are not measured and the things measured are not relevant. For them the cognitive dissonance is highest. To illustrate this with some quotes:

A lot of aid was conducted in a very naïve way, e.g., they had sent some consultants abroad and they believed that those consultants prepared the ground for the reform-programs. To carry out transformation, it demands both: the investigative functions, what is needed to do in a country and the legislative functions the Parliament has to prepare. It is the only way to function as a good international team. However, with hindsight it was a political process. They have to have some skills to do this job.

Regarding EU aid-providers; when a decision was made how to spend money it concerned also how to make over this money again. We promised e.g., to give 3 millions Euro to do something in a recipient country during a decided time. It was almost a standard that we gave 2-3 millions Euro to two-three-years projects. The capacity of the aid-receivers to spend this money was rather limited; they could not do it in a reasonable way. Thus, projects ended with producing only a huge number of reports or other written material, which no one saw. After this, new EU projects started in similar ways.

If I look at the global effect of all the aid-projects, in which I was involved in different countries, then I see that I have contributed to modernization of various authorities, their understanding for modern working-methods. We speeded up the work. Instead, looking at the same process from the perspective of labor market, then we did not contribute so much; it is enough to see the long queue at employment agencies.

It also explains why the advisors not caring that much about the values involved in their work are more easily convinced to find these procedures positive and even adapt their behavior to the procedures because of changing their attitudes about what is important in their work. Hence, when an organization measures its staff for its detachment, its ability to make up appearances and to achieve prefixed goals, it runs the risk that it is stuck with that type of professionals. The professionals, who are caring, problem-oriented, have the clients' interests in mind. They build expertise, aim at interventions that best suit the situation at hand, and base their advice on sound problem diagnosis might well run away. One of the respondents said:

We were in Russia 10 years. Certainly, they have a market economy but it did not work really well. Advice to them is time consuming and we do not have the time to be with them all the time. I believe, that we will leave Russia before the project accomplishes the major objectives. On the other hand, these objectives are not our goals. Russia has to fulfill them. We have no objectives, we are rather assisting or supporting in reaching them. They have to do this work by themselves.

The same person explains how it was possible for the Swedish experts to buy local expertise in a case it would be useful to aid providing:

We had a basic principle that we pay our civil servant and aid-recipients pay theirs. We could not pay for the civil servants from the aid-recipient countries, even if sometime their expertise would be useful for our projects. There were more and more aid-projects in which we needed their local expertise, but we could not pay them. Then, we paid the Swedish experts about 5000 Swedish crowns a day, which is enormous. You can ask; why did you do so? We did so that our experts could pay the local consultants. That was the method...

According to self-perception theories the outcomes in the reverse incentive experiment might be explained by a change in attitude, where those involved were stuck with the question 'who am I that I am acting in this fashion in this situation' and solved this problem by changing their attitudes according to their behavior. By inducing people to act in a certain way, one creates the associated values among them.

Some quotations from our previous research and data collection from the period of 2003-2007 illustrate quite well how the Swedish aid-providers have changed their attitudes towards aid-providing and moved their aid projects from assistance to the development of democracy. This was characteristic for the first phase of aid providing into the aid projects or programs addressing the public sector, especially within a social securities system in some CEE countries, and how the actors involved perceived their role within the chosen countries:

During the first period of aid providing, I believe that we did correctly. The theory was missing then, we tried to investigate the state of things before making a decision what we could do (...). It had taken five long years before we understood that they needed assistance to the public sector especially in social work. It was quite new for us. It was no one who had any experience in this regard. It was probably so because we were acting up to our convictions that this sector should work well during socialism. It was really surprise for us that this sector had to be reformed. This aid became the first priority for the Swedish government, and it was perceived very positively by us and by the aid-recipients. Shortly after in 1996, we were creating the new strategies how to co-operate with those countries to help them and develop democracy, market economy and improve the neighborly environment.

In Sweden, we started with assistance in 1989 in the framework of BITS and we had a lot of knowledge about these countries. They have been our neighbors. Moreover, our aid had to do with a very flexible politics. If we felt that one of our projects did not work in practice, we removed it. We were flexible in aid-providing all the time, while EU had big programs, very formal and be pressed for time.

We are only financing the aid-projects. We do not send experts abroad. The consultancy agency just recruits and hires experts. Many consulting agencies were involved.

Another respondent who participated in many projects and playing different roles in them turned from the idealistic person into the critical one regarding the role of the western aid-providers to the countries in transition:

I am very skeptic towards aid-projects that you have a short time to conduct them. I mean that many EU projects had too short time to carry out them while expectation is to change the world e.g., the project for Turkey 2003 for 10 millions Euro to modernize employment agency. It is a huge project and you have no people to work. The employment agency is very limited in its capacity to provide this assistance. Decision-making is top-down. This organization cannot handle such the project. It demands assistance and expertise to see the whole system. This money ought to be divided in the better way and the longer time (...) It is much money that goes to expertise. I have impression that they send many western consultants to create a well working labor market in CEE but it is not only that. It is very lucrative for the West. You give yours money out but you create employment to yours own people.

From the analysis of the collected interviews it showed that, even persons who were rather critical towards the Western aid providing turned into the person who were proud over her own contribution:

I am most proud over that I have initiated a very concrete cooperation between Sweden and Russia for preventing crime. The team I have created when participating in the aid-project is working together up today, like equal partners dealing with a fiscal legislation. They based their co-operation on trust that they created earlier. I am really glad to know it.

Another respondent adds:

There is a difference between the aid to the post-socialist countries in Europe and the aid to developing countries. It is not a question about Sweden earning money in these countries and that the Swedish money stays in Sweden. This aid is expected to get closer these countries and Sweden. Aid should contribute to signing a contract; extend some economic contacts that can make it easier for firms and

enterprise to set up their business. However, it is important that Sweden have a competence that is demanded.

Thus, the self-perception theory can help us to understand the various even mixing feelings behind participation within different aid-projects.

All in all the above analysis argues that the social psychology theorizing can be used to analyze the organizational behavior within the aid chain and the idea of proper socialization, resulting in a kind of psychological contract might offer a solution to the problems in professionalism as encountered previously. We argued that such socialization does not only apply to the 'normal' employees in an organization, but also to the world of international advisory work. We argued that it is insufficient for donor organizations just to hire consultants and send them as tabula rasas e.g. nitwits into the field. It might be better not just to negotiate about a contract, but also negotiate about the time to prepare, to discuss intensively; what can be mutually expected, what the consultants might expect on the job, and to discuss the mutual expectations in the probable case of emerging cognitive dissonance and seeming inconsistencies. This is important for all involved in international assistance. The recipient profits from a well-prepared consultant; the consultant profits because the advice given will be valued more if it is based on knowledge of the situation at hand; and the donor-organization profits, because it is better informed in advance about the choices the consultants are likely to make in case cognitive dissonance or other imbalances surface. However, next to the obvious advantages, there are also some drawbacks to this approach. These will be discussed in the next section.

6. A reflection on the added value for Public Administration

Theories stemming from Social Psychology offer an interesting analysis of the problem we are facing, namely how to create and restore professionalism in public organizations, as well as a direction in which solutions might be found. The solution is sought in organizational socialization, exposing employees early in their career to situations in which cognitive dissonance is bound to occur, resulting in a kind of psychological contract, i.e. the internalization of the classic values of professionalism. This could create justified trust that the job would be done according to expectation and even under adverse circumstances. It could make continuous oversight – monitoring, performance measurement, evaluations redundant.

Rousseau (1995) argues that the psychological contract is promise-based and, over time, takes the form of a mental model, programming, or schema, which is relatively stable and durable. There is, however, also criticism with regard to the concept. Mark Roehling (1997) e.g., criticized the conceptualization and the lacking research into the assumptions and implications of the construct. As he says: "Reported empirical investigations of psychological contracts can be counted on one's fingers" and "a lack of recognition and attention to competing views of the PC construct continues to be reflected in the PC literature" (Roehling, 1997: 3). Such empirical research could test the lasting value of early socialization, it could test the hypothesis that learning is more effective when it takes place early in one's career, which is opposite to the idea of lifelong learning, and it could show that it is possible to make newcomers in an organization adapt change or reweigh their cognitions. Such research could also address the question; whether it is true, as O'Donnell and Shields argue that, where the contract is mainly relational "based on building performance through feedback and a developmental focus — without scores and ratings", it results in enduring trust, but where it is mainly transactional and "psychological contract is focused around short-term and monetized exchange" the process "can lead to distorted results and raise issues of equity, ratings moderation and forced distributions" (O'Donnell & Shields, 2002: 439).

A second point of criticism concerns the concept itself. Guest (1998) addressed the conceptual problems in the usage of the psychological contract. Citing different scholars, he is able to conclude that different conceptualizations exist, in terms of perceptions, expectations, beliefs, promises and obligations. This is problematic because "Failure to meet expectations is of a rather different order than failure to meet obligations" (Guest, 1998: 651). According to him, it is also conceptually unclear when a psychological contract exists and when not. He argues further that the legal metaphor is inappropriate, because it is all in the eyes of the beholder that it is unclear what the agency is and that in many organizations, "there are multiple agents for the organization and they may be 'offering' different and sometimes competing contracts" (1998: 652). In this situation, it can be unclear, what the

key dimensions and the contents of a psychological contract are. Guest is of the opinion that one solution to this ‘problem’ is to make psychological contracts more transparent, but according to him, if psychological contracts are defined as being unwritten and implicit, they cease to be psychological contracts upon being made open and explicit (1998: 653). Guest argues there are serious problems concerning the content validity, the construct validity, questions about the testability and applicability and concept redundancy.

Notwithstanding his own criticism, Guest acknowledges: “The psychological contract provides a potentially fruitful construct with which to make sense of and explore <new>employment relationships” (p. 659). According to him, it is able to explicate and reduce the growing inequality in power i.e., in the relationship between the unrepresented individual and the sometimes monolithic organization, and “it has the potential, not yet realized, to integrate a number of key organizational concepts ... such as trust, fairness and exchange” (p. 660).

Regarding the confusing conceptualization, the concept of psychological contract has indeed been conceived in different ways with varying emphasis along at least five dimensions:

1. Emphasizing promises and obligations versus internalization of values;
2. Emphasis on the contract side versus the psychological side;
3. Emphasis on the organizational versus on individual aspects;
4. Emphasis on transactional versus relational aspects;
5. Emphasis on the possibility to change a psychological contract versus the sustainability thereof

Socialization and psychological contracts are not new phenomena. Although, according to our knowledge, empirical data are lacking, some organizations do indeed proceed accordingly. Welling (2007) has given a number of examples of psychological contracts and what is central in such contracts. It is illustrating to see how, for instance, a consulting company like Ernst & Young has interpreted the psychological contract.

Figure 1: Ernst & Young’s implied psychological contract:

	What Ernst & Young expects from its people	What employees can expect from Ernst & Young
1.	Do the right thing and succeed for clients	Recognize and reward individual’s contribution
2.	Energy, enthusiasm, stretch and excel yourself	Enjoyable place to work
3.	Build relationships, teamwork and the courage to lead	Care, listen and respond to people’s ideas and concerns
4.	Take charge and personal responsibility for your career	Continuous learning opportunities, access to knowledge and support for personal and career growth, and achieving your potential

Source: Wellin, 2007: 21.

It is illustrative for the general trend towards emphasizing promises and obligations, the contract side, the organizational side, and transactional aspects. This kind of arrangement is more reflecting the company policy, or at least their favorable imaging thereof. It is similar to raising children, telling them to do their best at school and be nice to their friends in exchange for food, pocket money and some parental attention. More important – and difficult – is to learn and facilitate them in making choices, how to behave, if they made mistakes. What to do, if they fail exams, and what to do and not to do if e.g., their free time activities interfere with homework, in case they get into a quarrel or fight with their peers, if they are tempted to do something their parents don’t want them to do, and what to do in case of other serious dilemmas.

Given our arguments presented in the previous sections, a psychological contract should involve something different than many present-day companies make of it. It should be the result instead of the starting point of a thorough socialization process, a result in which specific values are internalized in the heads of employees e.g., about the criteria for choices to be made, when basic dilemmas pop up. It should provide clarity about what to do when short-term goal achievement conflicts with long-term effectiveness. What to do when effectiveness and efficiency collide. How to react when external or

internal constraints inhibit optimal choices. What to do when one is confronted with unethical behavior. What to do when a client wants something completely different than was agreed; and what to do when – inevitably – something goes wrong.

Concluding, this section argued that despite the assumed advantages mentioned by the proponents of the concept of psychological contract, the suggested process from socialization, through exposing newcomers to situations in which cognitive imbalance, incongruity or dissonance arises, towards a psychological contract is a far from definitive solution. However, we believe that applying the principles of the psychological contract could reduce the risk of rising expectations in any organization, which is when it results in disappointment automatically results in increased monitoring and steering. There are still many uncertainties, a lack of empirical backing and much conceptual diffusion, which disputes whether it is a process useful in the public sector and whether it can – as was originally its intention – be an alternative for the practice of continuous monitoring, performance measurement and evaluation.

7. Conclusions

This paper asked the question whether Public Administration could learn something from insights from social psychology, regarding ways to create or restore professionalism in public organizations in other ways than by measurement, reorganizations and using incentive systems. We asked this question because of our findings in the area of international technical assistance in which according to us a dramatic change has occurred, in which the classic values of such advisory work have disappeared and a novel much less appreciated form of professionalism came to dominate. We argued that the position of many people within the world of foreign consultancy-industry, and in many other organizations as well, is similar to those of the students in the famous Festinger-Carlsmith experiment of 1959.

It explains why people with strong feelings about the substance for their work will experience the stress predicted by the consistency theories that focus on cognitive imbalance, incongruity and dissonance, whereas others, less pronounced in their attitudes, will change their attitudes according to their behavior being a result of self-persuasion or self-perception, and abandon the classic values of professionalism. Social psychology theories offer an explanation why classic professionals flee from such situations and the modern professionals start to dominate the organizations involved. As long as we are not able to measure outcomes and these are only to be derived inductively from reports on procedures, inputs and outputs, we may destroy more than we build up.

Do social psychology theories give us only a nice explanation for the problem observed, or do they also offer an alternative? The first solution would be not to expose people to situations similar to the experimental setting of Festinger and Carlsberg (1959) and at least not offer rewards for such behavior. However, in practice the opposite is visible. Organizations increasingly ask their employees to create the artificial reality by writing positive reports about their work. Social psychology theorizing tells us that intensive socializing, training and providing structure, resulting in a psychological contract might work. Very pragmatically, it tells us to:

1. Socialize newcomers during the first period they enter the organization. It is especially in these months or even the first year that it is possible to shape their attitudes. Therefore, clear guidance that transfers the right values and professional attitude is indispensable;
2. Expose them to situations in which cognitive imbalance, incongruity or dissonance is bound to occur and train them to adjust, add or reweigh their cognitions in accordance to the classic values of professionalism;
3. Recognize the decisive role of experienced organization members. It is not the role of leadership but the role of middle management that is crucial. Middle management will mainly guide new professionals. It is the transfer of values and attitudes and the perception of professionalism these people pass on to the newcomers that is of great importance;
4. Strive for an implicit mutual understanding of expectations – a psychological contract - which is not just a transactional contract about pay for performance, or an individualized employment contract, but the result of an extensive learning and adaptation process of

cognitions by which mutual and apparently justified trust is created and oversight can be diminished accordingly.

One may note that this is quite different from the strive for lifelong learning, the emphasis on skills and knowledge in training programs, the presumed role of leadership and the distrust indicated by continuous oversight.

Whether it will indeed work is not sure. The reflection on this theorizing points to many uncertainties about the lasting value of socialization, about its ability to replace the continuous monitoring and continuous performance measurement. It pointed also to the gap with reality where many organizations give far too little attention to newcomers and training programs are just meant to improve skills and knowledge. In addition, it pointed to the changing interpretation of the psychological contract, transforming it to some kind of steering mechanism, while it was originally a means to ensure that self-steering does not result in behavior that runs opposite to the goals of the organization. Such self-steering is important, because many professionals have to take decisions independently, but at the same time has to be restricted during an intensive socialization process in order to accomplish justified trust regarding professionals that act out of the required values of professionalism. This is especially the case in foreign consultancy where professionals not only go outside the organization to conduct their advisory work, but get completely out of sight when leaving the country.

Socializing employees in order to be able to trust them to make the best decisions possible, internalizing values, resulting in some form of a psychological contract, could make a difference in everyday practice in any organization.

8. References

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